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An Essay on Dropsy

Respectfully submitted for examination

by

Richard D. Thompson.



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The science of medicine has now arrived at such a state of improvement that little is left for the youthful student to engage in, but this collection of cases from those who have gone before him, I have chosen a subject which has been, until a few years past, not completely understood; the light which Dr Keil has thrown upon it precludes the hope of any addition from me; my only object is to show, by two or three cases, the advantage resulting from his mode of treatment. After the relation of these cases I shall proceed to describe the symptoms & method of cure. It appears necessary however in the first place to say a few words of the pathology of the disease.

The coherent & absorbent system forms an important part of the human machine, & although the action of life is not immediately destroyed by the suspension of the functions of this system, yet it is slowly & gradually lost when it ceases to carry on its usual parts. When the action of the absorbent is lost in a particular part, that part becomes disordered with

circulation, it forms what is called an anastomosing swelling. This
suspension of action sometimes takes place throughout the
whole system & constitutes what is called anasarca or general
oedema, but it is most frequently preceded by accumulation
of fluid in the arteries, caused by any
obstructing cause. Indeed it appears that coarctation of
the arteries accompanied by debility in the rest of the system
will produce the disease from the serum being forced out in
the cellular membrane in greater quantity than the absorbents
take up. It is much to be lamented that physicians have
heretofore considered the disease as produced entirely by debility
of the arteries & absorbents, when it has most commonly
arisen from just an opposite cause, but it shows the evils
from the blind adherence to theory. & as Dr Rush
observes, every physician must feel the pulse of their
patients at all in this disease. That dropping is often cured
by escape of action in the arterial system may be proved by
loss of pulse. We often feel a hard full & quick pulse in the
arteries & I have seen a case where the pulse would be in following, and

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blood drawn exhibited marks of inflammation nearly as strong
as in that disease. Dr Rush mentions a case of anasarca alter-
nating with ascites, which is certainly a disease arising from
excessive serous action. Dr Sydenham relates a case of dropsy
"which he cured by means of Buckthorn," a most successful
purgative, but he failed in the next case with the same
medicines: probably from its being a drop of ability. In
his account of his practice he appears to have placed his depen-
dence on drastic purgatives, which would in some cases
even supply the place of the lancet. He judged purga-
tives would infallibly in these degrees of debility arising from
chronic diseases. That it is sometimes inflammatory appears from
"spontaneous hemorrhage from the lungs, haemorrhoids &c. &c."
taking place; from some cases of the disease being con-
sidered worse by stimulating medicines, or from its succeeding
acute inflammatory diseases where bloodletting had not been
used to sufficient extent. In support of this I cite some of the
following arguments. They have to relate but a few cases
see which have come under my notice.

Butler Medical Repository.

William a negro man the property of R.D. Esq. was
attacked in the fall of the year 1864, with an inflammation
of billious fever, in the 28 year of his age. Bleeding was
never practiced in the course of his disease, but he recovered
in a great measure so as to resume his ordinary avocations
but complained of great debility. Dr. Oliverian gave in
persistently exposing himself to the night air he contracted
a cold which was in a short time followed by an
influenza which was strong & frequent. Third great attack when
the pulse was strong & frequent. Third great attack when
reaction very small. By the advice of a physician in the
neighborhood he commenced taking digitalis & continued
2 months without its producing any good effects he
then resorted to quinine with no better success, all the
symptoms of the malarial infection were taken but still no eff-
ects were produced in the disease. This mode of treatment
was persisted in for 6 months when no advantage
resulting from it, recourse was had to a quack
doctor for his skill in curing dyspepsia. This man
sunk deeproot of latent malaria from the malarial

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lived with almost as great feelings infused in hard
order to remove the prostatic I have not been able
to ascertain. This was evidently intended for atonic supp-
ply & was of course of service, he still however persis-
ted in the use of the medicine until the summer of
1806 when he died.

This case is not so remarkable as I could wish
from my not having attended the patient myself, but
it is fully enough to show the powerful effects of
stimulating or tonic medicines in diseases of great mor-
bid action, for the disease was evidently increased by the
exhibition of the turpentine. This aromatic turpentine, or tur-
pentine is a strong & stimulating matter, the turpentine is the prin-
cipal part, as the other ingredients combining the vegetable
among the most powerful, tonic of the materia medica
& with these the emulsion had performed a number of
cures.

The inferences to be drawn from this case are so ob-

was so scarcely to call for notice, the violent but
effects of the stimulating remedy made use of, clearly
point out, that a course directly opposite to the
one pursued would have been far more successful
& would probably have preserved life, but ignorance &
prejudice combined, prevented other remedies being employ-
ed, & in this case as in many others, hastened the vic-
tim to an untimely grave.

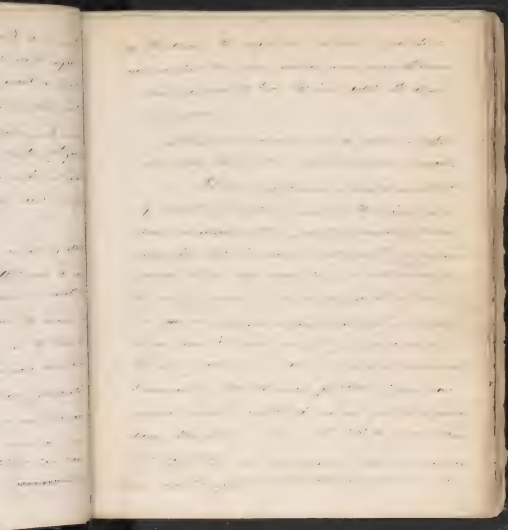
The next case I shall relate is more circumstantially
having had an opportunity of noting all the symptoms
and changes myself.

In the autumn of the year 1807, Anthony a
sugar man 53 years of age, very robust & large was
attacked with a violent acute inflammation, the pulse
was full strong, hard & frequent in the course of this
was drawn, the first day of his disease which was
September. The next day he took a large dose of calomel
& jalap, & on the third day he was that a week
time his blood being covered with a thick buffy coat.
The case of his disease was now attempted by many

Brown's fingers were frozen for several days & he sweated
 profusely. On the 8th or 10th day he complained of great
 difficulty of breathing, which was relieved by a third bleed-
 ing. The blood was now ~~colored~~ & mixed with a wat-
 erly white. He now recovered but very slowly & com-
 plained of a pain in his side which was conside-
 rably relieved by a blister now applied to the part which
 in some measure relieved him. In about a month he
 resumed his ordinary work but still complained of his
 legs which were very weak. He continued in this state
 untill the month of February when he complained of
 a difficulty of breathing particularly after any exer-
 cise little attention was paid here. he continued at
 work as usual untill the 15th of April when he came
 in from his work & complained that he could scarcely
 breathe. On examination I discovered that he had all
 the symptoms of hydropothorax. The pulse which in a healthy
 state beat 50 strokes in a minute now beat 90, and
 was full hard & at times intermitting. he experienced

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21st, New York, 1870



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The first thing I saw when I stepped out
of the car was a vast, open landscape. The
sky was a pale, hazy blue, and the ground
was a mix of dry grass and patches of bare
earth. In the distance, a range of low, rolling
hills could be seen under the soft light of
the morning sun. The air was still and
quiet, with only a few distant birds
breaking the silence. I took a deep
breath, feeling the coolness of the air
fill my lungs. The landscape was
desert-like, with no trees or large
shrubs in sight. The hills in the
background were covered in sparse, scrubby
vegetation. The overall scene was one
of peaceful isolation. I walked slowly
towards the hills, my feet sinking into the
soft ground. The sun was just rising,
casting a warm glow over the entire
scene. The hills appeared to be made
of soft, sandy soil, with small tufts of
grass growing here and there. The
sky was a beautiful shade of light blue,
with a few wispy clouds scattered
across it. The air was so clear that I
could see the details of the landscape
in great detail. The hills were not
very high, but they gave a sense of
scale and grandeur to the scene. I
felt a sense of awe and wonder as I
looked out over the vast expanse of
the land. The first thing I noticed
was the silence. It was a deep,
profound silence that seemed to
envelop me. The only sounds I could
hear were the soft rustle of my
clothing and the occasional chirp of a
bird in the distance. The landscape
was so beautiful that I almost
forgot to breathe. The hills were
so close that I could almost reach
out and touch them. The sun was
so low in the sky that it seemed
like it was just above the horizon.
The overall feeling was one of
peace and tranquility. I had found
a place that was truly beautiful and
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My dear mother
I have just received your letter of the 14th inst. and am
glad to hear from you. I am well and hope these few lines
will find you the same. I have been thinking much of late
of the future and of the many things that I have to do.
I feel that I must be more active and more energetic than
I have been. I have been too much of a dreamer and too
much of a theorist. I have been too much of a philosopher
and too much of a student. I have been too much of a
thinker and too much of a doer. I have been too much of
a man of letters and too much of a man of action. I have
been too much of a scholar and too much of a soldier. I
have been too much of a student and too much of a teacher.
I have been too much of a learner and too much of a leader.
I have been too much of a follower and too much of a guide.
I have been too much of a listener and too much of a speaker.
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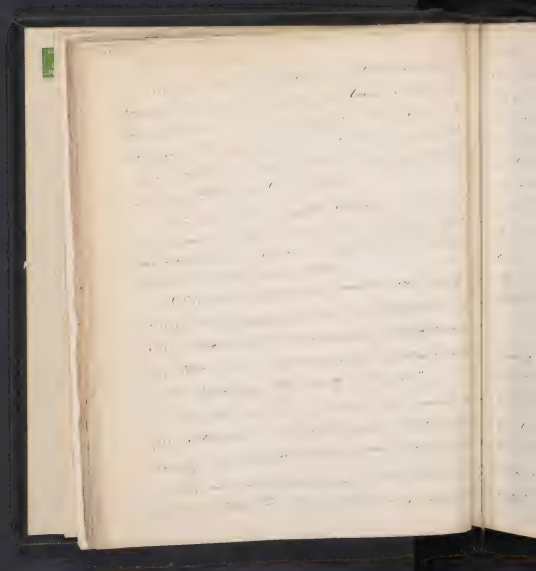
The first part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the
 various methods which have been proposed for the determination of
 the rate of reaction between a solid and a liquid. The most common
 method is that of measuring the change in weight of the solid as
 the reaction proceeds. This method is simple and direct, but it is
 often difficult to obtain accurate results, especially when the
 reaction is slow or when the solid is porous. Other methods which
 have been proposed include the measurement of the volume of gas
 evolved, the measurement of the change in refractive index of the
 liquid, and the measurement of the change in electrical conductivity
 of the liquid. Each of these methods has its own advantages and
 disadvantages, and the choice of method depends upon the nature of
 the reaction and the materials involved.

In the present paper, the rate of reaction between a solid and a
 liquid is determined by measuring the change in weight of the solid.
 The solid is a piece of metal, and the liquid is an acid. The
 reaction is carried out in a closed system, and the weight of the
 solid is measured at regular intervals. The results are plotted on a
 graph, and the rate of reaction is determined from the slope of the
 curve.

The results show that the rate of reaction increases with the
 concentration of the acid, and that it is independent of the surface
 area of the solid. This is in agreement with the theory of reaction
 rates, which states that the rate of reaction is proportional to the
 concentration of the reactants, and that it is independent of the
 surface area of the solid.

The present experiment is a simple and direct method for
 determining the rate of reaction between a solid and a liquid. It
 is suitable for use in the laboratory, and it can be carried out
 with a minimum of apparatus and materials.





desires is all the aforementioned matter paid in discharging
it, namely is usually lost to the operation called tapping.
For directions for performing this operation I must refer to
my next written to whom it properly belongs. I would only ob-
serve that the water should not be evacuated too suddenly
as it would produce a great degree of debility from the im-
mediate abstraction of so powerful a stimulus as the water, & a
danger should be immediately applied very fast around
the abdomen. Punctures in the legs & feet are often of
service & sometimes will discharge the whole of the water in the
body in two days. They are greatly preferable to blisters which in
some cases act for the same purpose.

The remedies which have been mentioned are chiefly in-
tended for that state of disease depending on too much action
& which I have called *trans discharge*. I shall now say a few words
of the numerous disorder in society of debility or stasis dis-
ease. As in the species already mentioned the first indication was
to spare Nature's action, so in this it should be to strengthen
in this action, & the first medicine I shall mention for increasing
this effect is Peruvian bark. This invaluable medicine must

he of great service in despatch by increasing the strength of both the arterial & venous systems. It is of advantage in any state of this disease should be given in pretty large doses. Wine is however valuable mainly in this species of dyspepsia some authors have recommended it but this succeeded from their having exhibited it without having had any attention to the fluids.

Cholagogue medicines & cathartic,atives of all kinds are of great service in atonic dyspepsia. Mercury has been known to cure several cases where a plentiful salivation has been excited by it. But this on very rare occasions should be given in combination with the tonic above mentioned. Quinine may be used in this disease as well as the other & often with great advantage, the same disease mentioned before may be used here. Ipecacuanha Dr. Cullen recommends it says of two remarkable & long applied to the extremities are very often of utmost advantage. Quinine is more serviceable in this in tonic dyspepsia it should always be used.

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I have now summarized the reasons which by the
best practical writers are supposed to be of most ad-
vantage in surgery in the relation of them. I would re-
commend the most careful attention to the state of the blood
for we too will depend their success. It was for a
long time considered as a monster with which the art of
medicine might contend in vain; now it then a enemy
was supposed to be conquered which would, I think, be true
but what has been his experience have that this monster
the more we supplicate in those which had gone by itself.
The great surgery & surgery were within two centuries
as the conquerors of the formidable enemy to the human
race, but their triumphs & disputation were of short du-
ration, for the monster from some appeared to gain additional
at various whole their passions as beneficial effects. In
vain did physicians search the vegetable & mineral kingdoms
for an antidote at one time flattered with the hope of success
& the next moment left the spots of despair. In this long
struggle we now thought of consulting the bodies which
had long fought him, when the conduct of the system

to the attention now paid all the publications of
Charles Butler & Co. & Co. & Co. A new light seemed now
to burst forth, these publications which had been thrown
aside as useless, were now noticed with the greatest interest
up to date appears now to be desired in a great measure
of one of the most useful ministers.

It now remains for me to express my obligations to
Dr. Butler for a great many of the services rendered in
this department. a. p. I shall have added my part to
the stock of information already possessed. I shall be
able to answer.

Dr. Butler

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your service